



23 SKIDDOO

A sizable body of folklore has accrued to the number 23--see, for instance, *The 23 Phenomenon* by Robert Anton Wilson (see *Fortean Times*, 23:32).

Usually, attention is focused upon its sinister aspect, but for Richard Connolly, a pub manager in Douglas, Isle of Man, it is a lucky number.

His recent 23rd birthday fell on 23 September; so, at 23:23 hours that day he placed a bet of £23 on the number 23 on the roulette wheel at his favourite gambling place, the Palace Casino in Douglas. He won £571.

"I was staggered when the ball popped into 23," he said. He would have won a lot more if he had had the conviction to resist hedging the bet by splitting it between the numbers each side.

(Source: *The Sun*, 25 September 1992.)

THE POWER OF NUMBERS - 7

The coincidental positioning of numbers has long held superstitious or mystical meanings for mankind.

Consider the number seven, the number most people think of as a 'lucky' number.

Take the example of a certain fellow, born on the 7th day of the 7th month of 1907. On his 70th birthday, 7/7/1977, he decided to gamble on his lucky number - seven.

So he visited his local race track, and noticed with amazement that horse number 7, in race 7 was odds on favourite to win, and the race started at 7 minutes past the hour.

Buoyed by all this synchronicity, our friend placed \$77 on horse number 7.

You guessed it, the horse came 7th!

WALTER CRONKITE'S UFO ABDUCTION?

Walter Cronkite, grand old man of the evening news and long time anchor-man for CBS News, now finds himself in the news, much against his will.

Close friends of Cronkite admit that he has become a member of the space age with a bang! Walter, they say, has had a close encounter of the third kind, that is, face to face with aliens.

Walter told close friends that he was seated on his verandah with an aperitif, waiting for dinner. Suddenly the house and grounds were severely shaken. Cronkite felt himself passing out, and thought he was having a heart attack.

Here's how the veteran newsman described the event to a close friend. "I came to," he says, "stretched out on something like an examination table, in a round, metallic room, perhaps 20 feet across. I tried to move, but was unable to. Several beings surrounded me - humanoid, I would say, but fuzzy, indistinct. They seemed to be fading in and out. I couldn't see them clearly. It wasn't my vision, because everything else was clear. I was mainly conscious of large, searching eyes."

For the next couple of hours he said his mind was filled with events from his own past, and from many of the major news events he had covered over the years. "I think they were conjuring it all up and recording it in some way," Cronkite said. Walter's friend continued with more bits and pieces of their conversation.

"Every so often, I get a powerful urge to go on the air with statements to the effect that the aliens are peaceful, law-abiding beings, who only mean us well, and can be very beneficial to us. But I don't KNOW anything, and I'm resisting every effort to become an apologist or propagandist for them."

"I'm in therapy. In the first place I want to know that I'm sane, and didn't

hallucinate all this. In the second place, if it DID really happen, I want to know if I'm the victim of post-hypnotic suggestion to 'prepare the way' for these, whatever they are. I've never believed in UFOs, but now I have a great deal of indecision on the matter."

"I may be a great disappointment to them, but I am NOT going before the camera to tell the world that they are our loving friends. Leave out the "r" and they could be fiends."

The fact remains that for four hours, Cronkite was missing. Anxious calls were made to the police. The grounds were searched. He was later found by the housekeeper peacefully sleeping in the chair on the verandah. "I swear he wasn't there before. That was one of the first places I looked. I'm ready to take a lie detector test and swear that Mr. C. was not on the property," she says.

Cronkite had every hope of keeping his experiences a secret for fear of damage to his credibility, but secrets have a way of being found out.

Walter's extraterrestrial experience may seem unbelievable to him, but many claim to have had similar experiences. And it will come as a relief that at last someone with unimpeachable credentials has had a close encounter as well.

(Taken from a story that appeared in the Confidential Reporter (USA), December 1991.)

47 UFO ABDUCTIONS IN THE USA PER HOUR?

"Implications of the Roper Abduction Poll", by Elaine Douglas

A just-released Roper Poll of adult Americans, commissioned by a Las Vegas real estate developer, estimates there are 3.7 million abductees in the United States.

This is the number extrapolated from Roper's random sample of respondents, 2% of whom answered "yes" to at least four out of five key questions developed by UFO investigators. The questions, relating to experiences typical of the abduction phenomenon, were, (1) "Have you ever awakened paralyzed

with strange figures or presences in the room?" (2) "Have you ever experienced 'missing time' for an hour or more?" (3) "Have you ever experienced flying through the air?" (4) "Have you ever seen unusual balls of light in a room?" (5) "Have you had any unexplained scars?"

The Roper figure is the first effort to quantify the abduction phenomena and estimate the extent of alien abduction activity in the United States.

The figure of 3.7 million people may indicate only part of the actual activity, since many, if not most, abductees are abducted more than once. If we assume an average of 5 abductions per person, that equals 18.5 million abductions. To calculate the rate of this activity, we need a time span, say 45 years the post war period. These assumptions suggest the aliens have conducted:

- 411,111 abductions per year, or
- 7,906 per week, or
- 1,129 per day, or
- 47 per hour

in the continental USA alone for the past 45 years.

It is likely abductions have been going on for longer than 45 years. If a longer time period is used, this would reduce the rate of activity. However, the poll did not count children, which aliens are known to have abducted. Thus, 47 abductions per hour may be substantially correct, if not understated.

(Source: "Operation Right To Know" Forum Newsletter, Vol. 1, #4, Sept/Oct 1992; via MUFONET on the ASTRONET Computer Network.)

BRAZILIAN AIR FORCE ADMITS UFOS ARE REAL

On 2 December 1954 came the last and most important development in this matter. A conference was performed at the Army Technical School, patronized by ADESG. (Superior Army School Graduates Association), a very responsible entity. The selected audience included important military personnel and civilian authorities. The subject to be discussed was entitled 'Flying Saucers'.

Colonel Adil de Oliveira was in charge. He made a careful evaluation of all information and evidence collected throughout the world since 1947. He analysed Project Blue Book and studied seven outstanding cases from the project's files. He discussed the best Brazilian sightings and concluded making the following statements:

1. Evidence shows that the saucers are real. No government could afford to ignore the reports about UFOs and all investigations should be made to determine the identity of any UFO sighted over the country. The problem could be of military interest.

2. The saucers appear to be some kind of revolutionary aircraft. They are not conventional phenomena or illusions. There are too many responsible people involved to say that the whole thing was an hallucination.

3. We don't know where they come from, and we don't know the purpose of their survey. I hope some day we can solve the riddle and know the answers.'

"Finally, closing the conference,



THE TWILIGHT ZONE

Brigadier Guedes Muniz said a few words: "We military technicians and aeronautic engineers have not tried in the past to discuss the technological and scientific probability of these space vagabonds. And we are not trying to discuss it now, because we remember an old story, very good to be recalled here: "Years ago, the best aeronautic engineers in the world assembled together to study the horn-beetle flight. They analysed the horn-beetle, it's aerodynamic shape entirely wrong, it's flight surface tremendously deficient, it's heaviness and it's incredible power. After a great deal of reasoning and scientific experimentation they had made certain that the horn-beetle could not fly. But the horn-beetle, knowing nothing of this, is still flying!"

(Source: Taken from a Brazilian Air Force official report, as published in Flying Saucer Newsletter CSI.- NZ. 1957)

HONDURAN MAN DECLARED DEAD COMES BACK TO LIFE

TEGUCIGALPA, 7 Jan. A man taken for dead came back to life as he was being put into a hospital morgue in the northern city of San Pedro Sula, local newspapers reported on Thursday.

Jorge Alberto Castillo was declared dead by a doctor late in December from stab wounds to the heart, *The Daily*

Tiempo said.

Tiempo said that the body of Castillo, 26, was marked with a death seal but that as he was being put into a cold chamber another doctor noticed that his heart continued to beat.

Physicians revived him with electrical shocks and performed open heart surgery to save him, *Tiempo* said. "I am alive because of the pure miracle that while I was in the morgue a doctor by the name of Pineda noticed that one of the veins of my throat still carried a pulse," Castillo was quoted as saying.

Castillo, a fruit and vegetable vendor, plans to file charges of homicide against his aggressor, a man identified as Roque Sabillon.

Castillo's wife said that his mother had already bought the coffin.

(Source: MUFONET Network, via ASTRONet)

ROCK 'N' ROLL EARTHQUAKE

The pop group Madness played two re-union gigs in Finsbury Park, north-east London, on the weekend of 8/9 August 1992 -their first for six years. It was probably "One Step Beyond" that set the crowd of 30,000 into a stomping rhythm that shook the neighbouring buildings with a quake estimated at magnitude 2 on the Richter scale. Appropriately, the song contains the words "earthquake eruption".

The quakes hit at 9.30 on Saturday and 9.00 on Sunday; the Sunday concert began half an hour earlier. The seismograph at the Science Museum, four miles away, didn't pick up any movement; but London sits on a bed of clay, lousy stuff for recording quakes. The buildings most affected--Anwell Court, Green Lanes and Rowley Gardens--were nine-storey tower blocks. Only people above the fifth floors felt anything, which suggested to Alice Walker of the British Geological Survey that the shockwave had a frequency of 2 Hz -two vibrations a second. Sound at this wavelength is below our hearing threshold, but can be felt up the spine.

Windows, ceilings and balconies were cracked, and tenants called the fire brigade. One tenant described his building "moving in a circular motion--it was like walking on an aeroplane". On the Sunday night, thirty tenants, a dozen fire officers, eight police officers and a council surveyor gathered outside the Rowley Gardens flats.

In 1984 and 1987, U2 concerts in Brussels formed very precise patterns on a seismometer five kilometres away.

(Sources: *The Guardian*, 11 & 26 August 1992; *The Daily Mail*, 18 & 26 August 1992.)

HURRICANE BLOB

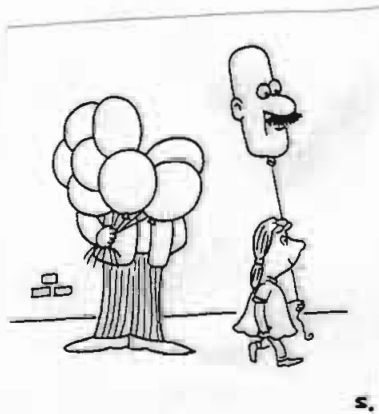
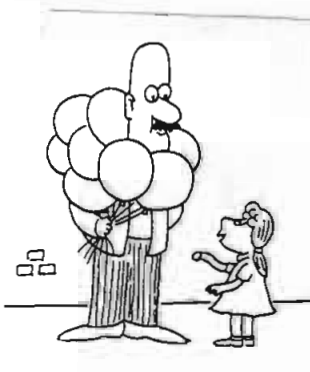
Hurricane Andrew stirred up something weird in Elwood Guillot's pond in Independence, Louisiana, off Interstate 55, about fifty miles north of New Orleans.

Nobody was really sure if the transparent gelatinous blobs are animal, vegetable or chemical. They were found on 26 August by Elwood's grandson Michael, out inspecting the storm damage.

The main blob was a bit smaller after three days, but was still more than a foot across. Michael Guillot plunged his net into the pond and came up with several more blobs.

Biologist Bob Thomas said the blobs were "harmless crowds of single cell organisms", which doesn't really leave us any the wiser.

(Source: AP, 29 August 1992.)



FROGS FROM SPACE!

The phenomenon of life forms falling from the skies is discussed in a six-part TV series, *Weather Watch*, shown in November/December on the BBC. It features eyewitness accounts and also poses scientific explanations for the strange showers. (A book of the same name is available, authored by Paul Simon, a science writer and BBC producer.)

Reports of showers of animals, living and dead, plants and inanimate objects are so numerous--and from all over the world--that the phenomenon is far from unusual. Showers of young frogs or toads, usually alive, are the most frequently seen, falling from the sky with the rain. In Britain, falls of small eels, fish, periwinkles, snails, starfish and tadpoles have been witnessed.

One incident happened at Trowbridge, UK, in 1939, and was reported in *The Times*. An open-air swimming pool became the target for thousands of falling frogs. The event is

remarkable in the annals of freak showers because so many people saw it happen. Many of these witnesses, who were children at the time, recall the event vividly. The day had been overcast and thundery, when the sky opened. "It was a job to walk on the path without treading on them," remembered one woman. The same area has seen similar incidents in the meantime.

There are no doubt many cases which go unreported--perhaps eyewitnesses ignore or forget what they've seen, or keep quiet for fear of ridicule. However, it is well-known that large numbers of small frogs can emerge from cover after a rain shower; but, while this may explain some events, it does not account for other cases in which, say, fish are found on a roof, or mustard seeds and haricot beans swoosh out of the sky on successive days.

One likely explanation for most of the weird showers points to whirlwinds and waterspouts which scoop up frogs

or fishes from ponds, lakes or the sea, carrying them for miles and dumping them on land. But this doesn't explain why other objects from their habitat don't fall from space with them. Perhaps a waterspout vortex, with thick cloud cover above, drops heavier materials earlier on its journey?

Another possibility has been proposed by naturalist Ian Darling, from Slimbridge, Gloucestershire. He has a report of pink frogs being lifted into the air by strong winds on the fertile edge of the Moroccan desert--which could account for pink frog falls at Stroud a few years ago, and similar falls over Europe. He claims that two or three times a year, sand from the Sahara does fall on the UK--strong winds during 1987-88 brought both frog rains and falls of red Saharan dust.

Perhaps the Biblical plagues were true after all. They are similar to phenomena still experienced today which would seem to be real meteorological events.

(Source: *Fortean Times*, #65, 1992.)